Recommendations for 4-H in Alberta for the 80's

Report on Phase III

A study of 4-H in Alberta

Alberta
AGRICULTURE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 4-H IN ALBERTA FOR THE 80's

REPORT ON PHASE III

A STUDY OF 4-H IN ALBERTA

MAY, 1982

RECOMMENDATIONS PREPARED BY CORE COMMITTEE
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Executive Report

A. PURPOSE OF THE 4-H STUDY

In 1976, the Task Force on 4-H, which resulted in the relocation of 4-H to Alberta Agriculture, suggested the initiation of a "fairly extensive research program on various aspects of 4-H . . . to ensure that 4-H programs were meeting the current needs of members and leaders". In December, 1978, the 4-H Branch submitted a Research Project Proposal to the Planning and Research Secretariat, requesting an assessment of:

a) whether the 4-H program in Alberta reflects the changing needs of rural youth, and
b) whether Alberta Agriculture's 4-H programs and services to 4-H members and leaders are in support of the overall purpose of 4-H.

A three-phase program was developed in response to the 4-H Branch request. Phase I consisted of a historical review of 4-H in Alberta and documentation of demographic, economic and social trends in Alberta. The Phase I report was completed in 1979.

Phase II addressed itself to the current 4-H program in Alberta and projections for the eighties. A 4-H program review and research study was prepared for the Home Economics and 4-H Division by Alberta Agriculture's Planning and Research Secretariat, under the direction of member C. Gail Stinson and Social Research Consultant, Ann L. Harvey, Ph.D.

The research questions were aimed at determining the changing needs of rural youth, whether the 4-H program could attract non-rural youth and whether the programs and services were fully supportive of the purpose of 4-H. Also, the study sought to determine if solutions could be found to offset the decline in 4-H membership and to find out why the average member involvement in 4-H was of very short duration.

The marketing approach was to answer the following questions posed by the 4-H Branch:

1. Can 4-H attract more members in the population than it is currently serving and increase member's tenure with the organization?
2. Can 4-H attract more volunteer leaders in the population than it is now serving and increase leader's tenure with the organization?
3. To what extent is it feasible for 4-H to attempt to expand its target markets to include more non-farm members? What would be a possible market strategy?

During the 1980-81 club year, the study collected data from 4-H members, leaders, parents, staff, sponsors, and a cross-section of the public that could be interested in 4-H as a member or leader. The final report of Phase II of the study was completed in June, 1981 and contained 30 recommendations.

B. METHODOLOGY

The 4-H Branch Head established a core committee comprised of representatives of the 4-H Branch, Home Economics Branch, Alberta 4-H Council, and a 4-H sponsoring organization to:

1. Review reports of Phase I and Phase II of the study and other documents.
2. Review reports of sub-committees.
3. Prepare and update statement of purpose and objectives of 4-H in Alberta.
4. Develop and submit recommendations to Alberta Agriculture.

C. CORE COMMITTEE REPORT

Based on the review, the core committee submits the following report containing recommendations to Alberta Agriculture.

I. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF 4-H

The purpose and objectives were updated as follows:

a) Purpose

To enable youth to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society.

b) Objectives

Youth, having participated in 4-H, will be able to:

1) Demonstrate knowledge and skills in specific project areas.
2) Use effective communication skills.
3) Exhibit increased self-esteem.
4) Practice active citizenship.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations of the core committee are aimed at achieving the purpose and objectives of 4-H as well as the following goals:

1) Increased membership in 4-H.
2) Improved leadership recruitment and training.
3) Improvement in programs and projects.
4) Effective staff support.
5) Improvement in staff liaison and communication.
6) Clearer delineation of the role of staff and leaders.

RECOMMENDATION 1: MEMBERSHIP AGE

A 4-H member must be at least 10 by the end of the club year, and must be no older than 19 at the beginning of the club year.

RECOMMENDATION 2: TARGET AUDIENCES

Recruitment of new 4-H members will be directed towards youth who reside in the following locations:

a) farms
b) acreages
c) hamlets, villages and towns
d) small cities

RECOMMENDATION 3: CLUB/PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The 4-H Branch investigate the feasibility of structuring clubs and programs by junior, 10 to 13, and senior, 14 to 19, sections.

RECOMMENDATION 4: RECRUITMENT OF LEADERS AND MEMBERS

a) Leaders: People actively involved in community organizations, and parents of youth of 4-H age, should be encouraged to become 4-H leaders.
b) Members: Promotional campaigns for member recruitment be suited to the various target audiences. These audiences include those youth identified in Recommendation 2, as well as parents.
c) An effective communication and liaison system be established to inform members, leaders, parents, staff, sponsors, and other agencies of opportunities available to 4-H members and leaders.

RECOMMENDATION 5: LEADER TRAINING AND RECOGNITION

The core committee wishes to emphasize that the 4-H leader is an integral part of 4-H and is vital to the implementation of the program.

a) A uniform sequential leader training program be implemented province wide.
b) Opportunities for leader training be localized where possible and offered at times suitable to leaders.
c) Emphasis in leadership training will focus on: the purpose and objectives of 4-H; the knowledge and skills needed by leaders; the roles of volunteers and staff.
d) 4-H staff will take every opportunity to ensure the local public recognition of 4-H volunteers, supporters and sponsors.

RECOMMENDATION 6: PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

a) Projects be reviewed and updated regularly and those of low interest be discontinued unless current conditions warrant their continuance.
b) Starting with the most popular projects, the 4-H Branch will develop a clear progression of units within each project. Variable term projects will be developed as well. Special projects may be developed to accommodate unique agricultural conditions in each region.
c) 4-H leaders and members will be encouraged to introduce other existing projects to their area.
d) Continued support to be given to Provincial Selections program and the method of selecting delegates to this program be reviewed.
e) A review of the criteria for selection of Premier Award be undertaken.

f) Continued support be given to the speech program emphasizing its non-competitive aspects.

g) The 4-H Branch will work with other agencies and government departments involved with youth development, to identify areas of overlap, to develop complementary programs and to facilitate the sharing of resources.

RECOMMENDATION 7: STAFFING

a) Alberta Agriculture must ensure that adequate numbers of staff are available to implement the 4-H program. The type and number of staff will be based upon the nature of support needed for effective operation. A review be undertaken to determine the type and number of regional staff required.

b) Headquarter 4-H staff will maintain responsibility for provincial project/program development and implementation. A provincial leadership training position be established. Headquarter 4-H Branch staff will continue to supervise Regional 4-H professional staff.

c) Regional 4-H Specialists will be responsible and accountable for the delivery of the 4-H program in their region. These regions may encompass specific geographical areas not necessarily coterminous with present department boundaries.

d) The important role of support staff to the program's operations is recognized. Regional 4-H staff to provide input into selection and supervision of the support staff.

e) On a request basis, other Alberta Agriculture staff, including District Agriculturists, District Home Economists and Specialists, will provide technical support to the 4-H program.

f) Orientation and training of staff will focus on: the purpose and objectives of 4-H; knowledge and skills needed by staff; and the roles of volunteers and staff.

g) 4-H staff will have opportunity to update their knowledge and skills by acquiring further professional degrees, attending conferences, staff exchanges and education events, especially in the disciplines of extension, communications, and youth development.

RECOMMENDATION 8: ADMINISTRATION

a) The 4-H Branch is to be maintained as a viable, high profile branch within Alberta Agriculture.

b) The Alberta 4-H program continue to be involved at the national and international levels.

c) A comprehensive communication system will be implemented. This system will delineate the communication lines within the 4-H Branch and Alberta Agriculture, as well as their links with other agencies and governmental departments.

d) An accurate and up-to-date retrieval information system will be implemented, recording membership participation and provincial level award recipients.

e) Liaison with other Alberta Agriculture divisions, sponsors, farm organizations and other community groups will be ongoing at all levels.

f) The 4-H Branch will initiate opportunities for provincial, regional and district councils to assess their roles and responsibilities within the 4-H organization.

APPENDICES

PHASE II: 4-H PROGRAM REVIEW

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Planning & Research Secretariat
Alberta Agriculture
June, 1981

EXECUTIVE REPORT

OVERVIEW

Phase II of the 4-H Study initiated in 1978 was a review of the current 4-H program in Alberta with some projections for the next decade. Phase II data were collected during the 1980-81 club year from 4-H Members, 4-H Leaders, staff directly and indirectly involved in 4-H, 4-H sponsors, and a cross section of the public at large that might be interested in 4-H as a Member or Leader. (Phase I consisted of a historical review of 4-H in Alberta and documentation of demographic, economic and social trends. Phase III will consist of the implementation stage.)

BASIC QUESTIONS

Phase II research addressed the 4-H Program as being in a condition of faltering demand where membership was showing a decline. Basic questions addressed were whether the 4-H Program reflects the changing needs of rural youth, whether the program could attract large numbers of non-rural youth and whether 4-H Programs and services are supporting the purpose of 4-H to the fullest possible degree.

AREAS OF INQUIRY

Specific question areas included the following: How many people are aware of 4-H, and what do they know about it? What image does 4-H have and how does that compare to what most young people do in their spare time and what they would like to do in their spare time? How do people spend their spare time? Who influences youth and adults to join 4-H? Who are typical people in 4-H and what needs do they have that 4-H can meet? What are the problems in 4-H and why do people leave? What should the purpose of 4-H be for the Eighties and what is the most suitable age for members? Which are the strongest programs in 4-H and what are the cost benefits from 4-H? What aspects of 4-H Program delivery could be improved?

DATA COLLECTION

Answers to the questions were sought through questionnaires designed for each of the respondent groups. All answers were anonymous. Students of 4-H age completed questionnaires during supervised class time, 4-H Members completed questionnaires at 4-H meetings, 4-H Leaders, the random sampling of adults and staff received questionnaires by mail and sponsors received personal letters. The samples were large and were considered representative of the target groups.

THE SAMPLE

All members in 59 randomly drawn 4-H clubs were surveyed with 725 useable returns. The return rate from 4-H clubs was 100 per cent. The student sample consisted of 22 grade 8 classes and 22 grade 10 classes drawn from four population density groupings. Forty-three classes responded, making a return rate of 98.0 per cent. A total of 976 students responded. 4-H Leaders and Assistant Leaders sampled totaled 1,026 with 627 responding, a 61.1 per cent rate of return. Two thousand adults were randomly sampled and 740 responded producing a 37.0 per cent rate of return. Alberta Agriculture staff receiving questionnaires totalled 236 with 164 responding, a 69.5 per cent rate of return. Letters were sent to 19 sponsors, 9 responded resulting in a 47.3 per cent rate of return.

DATA ANALYSIS

The questionnaires were coded and computer analyzed; written-in responses were content analyzed and summarized. Descriptive statistics were used throughout. The Full Report contains the tables reporting results of the data analysis and the interpretation of the statistics. The conclusions from the data analysis have been grouped by topic and are presented in the following section.

CONCLUSIONS

4-H PURPOSE AND CLIENTELE

C.1 The strength of 4-H lies with its farm membership (84 per cent of 4-H Members in the years 1976-1979). 4-H Members from farms are close to being equally split between sexes, are represented in the 13 to 15 year age group equal to the 10 to 12 age group and stay in 4-H longer than 4-H Members from acreages and small towns (called "non-farm"). Non farm 4-H Members are three quarters girls, are over-represented in the 10 to 12 year age group and stay in 4-H a shorter length of time.

The majority of students who know anything about 4-H live in centres of 5,000 or less population and perceive 4-H to be a club for country youth to learn about country living.

The population living in rural areas has shifted somewhat from farms to rural holdings but the total remains stable and if anything is rising (Myers, p. 35)

C.2 Although many staff members stated concerns about lack of clarity of the purpose of 4-H, strong support was not found for any of the purpose statements under study in this survey.

C.3 Male 4-H Members are different from male students on many factors including spare time activities they find satisfying, competitiveness, amount learned in spare time activities and perceived positive aspects of 4-H.

AGE

C.4 Thirteen to fifteen year old boys and girls see 4-H as being for their age group. Ten to twelve year old non 4-H females also see themselves as the right age for 4-H. The remaining 10 to 12 year old groups (4-H Members and non 4-H males) saw themselves a bit young for 4-H and all 16 to 18 year old groups saw themselves as a bit old for 4-H.

C.5 The recommended age of clientele for the current statement of purpose was 12 to 15 years according to three out of four staff groups. (The four staff groups included: 4-H staff, Home Economics staff, District Agriculturists, and other Agriculture staff.)

MEETING NEEDS THROUGH 4-H

C.6 4-H Members would prefer shorter-term, slightly easier projects. Otherwise, 4-H meets their needs as well as the theoretical Best Club for people their age.

C.7 The main reasons members drop out of 4-H are that they grow out of it and they have too much else to do.

C.8 Secondary reasons that members drop out of 4-H are: all their friends are quitting, overlap with some school courses, repetition in the 4-H Program, lack of program interest and insufficient parent support.

C.9 The majority of clubs are beef, light horse and clothing, resulting in limited variety of projects from which members can choose.

C.10 Some projects have rarely, if ever, been offered in some regions.

C.11 Competition in 4-H was considered the least important reason (out of 14 reasons) for leaving 4-H by members.

MEMBER ACTIVITIES

C.12 The Speech Program was rated as most meritorious of all 4-H Member activities by all four staff groups.

C.13 The Provincial Selections received no merit ratings from three out of our staff groups.

C.14 The cost of staff and most services for the 4-H Program was $94.37 per member in 1978/79 and 108.84 per member in 1978/80.

RECRUITMENT

C.15 Mothers, farm fathers and 4-H Leaders were the most important sources of influence on youth to join 4-H.

C.16 Adult respondents who knew anything about 4-H saw it in much the same light as 4-H Leaders. 4-H does not have an image gap among adults.

C.17 Adult respondents were more likely to watch television or listen to music in their spare time than 4-H Leaders. They were much less likely to be involved in club or community activities than leaders. They were also much less likely to have children in the 4-H age range.

C.18 About 5 per cent of respondents expressed interest in leading 4-H clubs. This is a higher percentage than one could expect to find the population since those with some interest were likely to respond to the questionnaire; those without interest would constitute the 63 per cent "no return" group.

C.19 The following aspects of 4-H Leadership were attractive to potential leaders and to current leaders: opportunities to work with young people, to improve the community, to do worthwhile volunteer work, to meet new friends with similar interests, to start a club from which one's own children might benefit and to receive leadership training.

C.20 Leader recruitment does not appear to be the clear responsibility of any staff position.

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

C.21 The amount of time and work required of 4-H Leaders needs to be reduced since "Lack of time" and "Increased or heavy job responsibilities" were the two single most important reasons for leaving 4-H according to the leader sample. Other reasons for leaving ("Too much printed material circulated" and "Too much travel," supported by about half the sample) underline the need to reduce time and work required of leaders.

C.22 Most 4-H Leaders do not want to be paid for their efforts, however, they do want to be appreciated for their efforts.

LEADER TRAINING

C.23 A substantial number of members, especially those who are 13 or older, feel poor leadership (leaders not knowing how to lead a club or not knowing enough in general) is reason for leaving 4-H.

C.24 "Lack of knowledge in working with youth," "Lack of understanding of 4-H purposes" and "Lack of leadership ability" were considered Very Important reasons for leaders to leave 4-H by approximately one-quarter of the leader sample and Somewhat Important reasons to leave by half the leader sample.

C.25 According to staff, leader training is left to personal experience more than any other single source of information.

C.26 Individuals are more likely to remain with a 4-H club project in a leadership capacity if they serve at different times as assistant leader and leader than if they serve as only one or the other.

STAFFING

C.27 The current level of 4-H staffing is inadequate to meet the expressed needs of all leaders for assistance from the 4-H Specialist, District Home Economists and District Agriculturists.

C.28 Staff roles need to be clarified.

C.29 4-H occupies about eight hours per month of the average District Home Economist's time and three and one-half hours per month of the average District Agriculturist's time.

INITIAL STAFF TRAINING

C.30 Only a minority of staff reported initial staff training that helped in their 4-H work.

COMMUNICATIONS

C.31 Television was the most popular spare time activity by all age groups of students sampled and of 4-H Members aged 10 to 15 years

C.32 Mass media channels for communicating with leaders and members are not used by all staff.

C.33 Both 4-H staff and Home Economics staff communicate directly as a matter of course with both leaders and members.

C.34 The average leader is expected to read over 200 printed pages of mail per year.

C.35 Few staff reported use of community networks in their 4-H work.

ADVISORY COUNCILS

C.36 The majority of leader respondents rated direction from the three levels of Council as Somewhat Important.

Considering the individual time required of members to sit on these Councils, it would be desirable for direction from at least one level of Council to be considered Very Important by a majority of leaders.

RECORD KEEPING

C.37 Follow-up data are currently not available on outstanding 4-H Members.

C.38 Readily accessible up-to-date data on 4-H club membership are not available.

SIDE EFFECTS FROM 4-H ON ALBERTA AGRICULTURE

C.39 The benefits 4-H brings to Alberta Agriculture include increased visibility of the Department, increased requests of staff to communicate to groups, increased use of Department publications and contacts for other purposes.

C.40 Negative side effects from 4-H on Alberta Agriculture arise from unclear staff roles and uneven programs for leaders.